

The Yoke by Cerfblanc

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Language: English

Characters: Cynthia, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lonnie Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers & Joyce Byers, Jonathan Byers & Will Byers, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

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Summary:

Maybe the blip in electricity was enough to turn Jonathan, enough to make him notice how ill his mother is becoming, enough to make him drive to his father demanding answers—enough to make him feel there's something more with Nancy and the softly-casted glances—maybe it's more than enough to give him hope, especially for Will.

The Yoke

Author's Note:

Sooo I've just recently started watching Stranger Things (I'm kinda late, oh well) and Jonathan is just really precious, and I feel that I can relate to him a lot <3 feedback and kudos are MUCH appreciated as this is my first work based around Stranger Things! Hope you enjoy :D

'When routine bites hard, and ambitions are low,'

It happens when, whilst trying to swallow the dryness in his throat and trying to numb away the picture of his mother's troubled expression, Jonathan's fingers brush across something that resembles paper. He asks himself whether or not he wants to grip onto whatever it is and pull it out from the drawer he's sifting through.

'And resentment rides high, but emotions won't grow,'

He swallows briefly as he takes it out, realising it's a somewhat bulky envelope of old photos. He blinks, turns it sideways; it's already opened, and he can see the texture of the film in the poor light of the lamp sat on the chest of drawers. He can see half of his brother's smiling face in the exposed photo, his toothy grin and pale complexion visible. He's younger in this memory.

'And we're changing our ways, taking different roads—'

The music is cut from Jonathan's bedroom, and he frowns and turns his head down the hall to where his open door stood ajar.

The lamp sat on the chest of drawers flickers.

The electricity blips momentarily.

Jonathan blinks as he recalls his mother's face and her frantic explanation about his little brother.

The lights, the lampshades thrown to one corner of her bedroom, the

bulbs bare and white and her eyes, *her eyes*, the bruised-hues hanging low, they'll grow into her cheeks soon if she doesn't shut her eyes, if she doesn't let sleep overtake her—Jonathan figured that his mother just...wasn't *there*.

Not right now.

Not right now, not now.

Not with Will *gone*, not with his little brother lost—somewhere that didn't even remotely *feel* close to Hawkins—it was impossible to not do anything that his mother was doing.

Then why am I not feeling like that?

In a quick attempt Jonathan puts away the envelope, back into the drawer, made sure he slid them underneath some old documents of his mother's. There were no thumbtacks in there. He couldn't find what he needed.

He feels his heart beat loud when he lifts up the many printed posters he'd recently made. He doesn't know what to think anymore, and it's only the beginning.

But it'll get better, Jonathan thinks, *it has to*.

The music fizzes back to life from his bedroom.

'—Love, love will tear us apart, again.'

* * *

Fathers were meant to be these oh-so-amazing role models, weren't they?

"Who're you?"

The first thing Jonathan notices is how slim and typical and downright annoying this woman is, wonders how she even ended up with

a man like his father, wonders if she really likes him, wonders if she has the same *mentality* as him (she probably does, come to think of it) and he briefly forgets why he's driven into the city, never mind even knocking the door.

For Will, that's it, he remembers.

"Is Lonnie here?" He asks, hesitant but desperate, wants to get out of the area fast, before he cracks, before he becomes like his mother. The name feels foreign when he speaks, like a bad taste, trying to rid it.

He gets some sort of expression from the woman, ignores her voice and feels his eyes slip past her own and into the open doorway. It's then he realises he's just pushed past her and he's in, and it's only a matter of seconds before he turns, and he sees the unashamed grin of his father, and his weathered hands are smoothing down his shoulders and he's snapping at him to get away.

"Don't touch me," Jonathan mutters, steps once to feel his back hit the poorly plastered wall.

"How you been?" His father has the nerve to play happy-families. Jonathan feels his gut plummet, and the anxiety is high.

"Where's Will?" He asks.

* * *

Maybe I'm the only one who's normal, and the rest of them are just...not normal.

Everything intensifies when Nancy is literally stood beside Jonathan, and he wants to flee when she tries to smile at him, tries to be nice—for God's sake she was *beautiful*, more than nice—actually, that was an understatement, she was just about everything any other girl her age wanted to be, but—*why Steve?*

And why not *him*?

“Hi.” She says, tilts her head, pink lips smiling, voice timid but with thoughtful effort sifting along the edges, and it’s enough to make Jonathan stammer in response, but he feels warm—and it’s comforting.

“Hey,” he says back, wonders if he’s too gentle, too quiet and too soft unlike the rest of his gender, unlike *Steve*—and oh, *shit*—Steve was right there at Nancy’s locker, with Tommy and Carol, eyes directly on Jonathan.

“I...I can’t imagine what you must be going through.” Nancy says, purses her lips, shuffles a little, like that’s going to do something to make things less awkward, and Jonathan can only fumble with the last thumbtack he’s pushing into the cork board. He looks at Will’s picture, swallows at his how innocent and happy he looks—how different he must look right now in the present, wherever he was, whoever he was *with*.

He glances back at Nancy, slips his hands into his jean pockets. “Yeah...it’s...pretty shit.” *Imagine losing Mike, that’s what it feels like.*

She smiles at that. Though it’s a sad smile. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.”

“Hm.”

She leaves then, when the school bell rings, a calling to depart. She leaves with giving him a look with deep, doe-like eyes, another little smile, one that tugs at his lungs, sends his heart off in one direction completely irregular in beat, and makes him take in a sharp breath.

She must feel it too, then.

She must feel it from Mike.

She must feel the loss.

Jonathan hopes she does. He wonders if she thinks about him and his family. Wonders if she thinks about his mother, maybe wonder why

his father is never around.

Wonders why Jonathan is so reserved to himself.

He hopes she understands that. Maybe she'll wonder even more, wonder to the point of asking an idle question—he hopes she'll think of doing that.

Because he feels warm when she talks to him.

And it helps.